

THE RAP SHEET:

A FANZINE FOR PELGRANE PRESS' GUMSHOE™ ROLEPLAYING SYSTEM

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WELCOME back to the second issue of *The Rap Sheet* (TRS), a small, irregular fanzine published to support Pelgrane Press' *Gumshoe* game system.

The focus for this issue is Initiative, or more specifically how you can use Initiative mechanics to get more out the *Gumshoe* system's combat system. This includes introducing a new, more in depth Initiative system, that we hope will not only assist *Gumshoe* GMs in determining the order of combat, but also add more tension and drama to your game.

Also, it was pointed out that producing a second issue is a big hurdle for most fanzines, so it's a great feeling to see this issue hit the web. Still we'd love your help, support and feedback! If you have sometime to say about this issue (or the zine in general), we can be contacted via email at - attherapsheet@gmail.com

Thanks again for taking the time to stop by and we hope you enjoy this issue!

WHAT IS THE GUMSHOE SYSTEM?

The *Gumshoe* system is a new way of looking at investigative roleplaying. The mechanics inherent in *Gumshoe* games offers a simple and intuitive method of writing, running and playing mystery scenarios. It ensures fast-flowing play that always gives you the informational puzzle pieces you need to propel your latest case toward its exciting final revelations.

Currently this system runs many different games, all published by Pelgrane Press. These include: *The Esoterrorists*, *Fear Itself*, *Trail of Cthulhu* and *Mutant City Blues*.

For more information on any of these games, and future releases, see - www.pelgrane.com

The Team at the Rap Sheet

ACTION, REACTION

*This article looks at how GMs can quickly and easily add an Initiative mechanic to any of the *Gumshoe* games. This optional mechanic is part of *The Rap Sheet*'s continuing series of additional rules that was started in Issue One.*

INTERESTINGLY, the impetus for this article arose out of a real life experience. Normally, I'm all in favour of more flexible rules, even when dealing with something as mechanical as the order of combat. However, during a recent session of *The Esoterrorists*, a brief - and might I say slightly heated - discussion arose over why one individual should or could act prior to a supposed 'surprise' attack from Outer Dark Entity. While this conversation was resolved amicably, it did raise the question of whether or not some more solid Initiative rules would be of a benefit to the system.

As currently written, the *Gumshoe* system (in all of its guises) outlines no specific rules on 'Initiatives' (i.e. the order in which the combatants act in combat) beyond those noted in the *Free-for-All* section. While rarely an issue - I'm sure most GMs and players can simply rely on their perceived order of events to maintain a control over the scene - there are points during play in which a more mechanical approach could be seen as a necessary addition.

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While these Initiative rules have been designed to enhance a specific part of the *Gumshoe* game experience, often it is not always necessary to go to such lengths to determine when a character might act. In most cases, the simple mechanics noted in the *Free-for-All* section of the various *Gumshoe* rulebooks will more than suffice.

Furthermore, I've gone to the lengths to try and isolate what a character can or can't specifically do during an action. Again this is not always appropriate, especially in scenes which would occur over a more expansive timeframe (for example a car chase, or in a battle of wits). As always, it is up to you and your fellow players to decide what is best for your gaming experience.

ROLLING FOR 'INITIATIVE'

When a scene occurs that requires a specific order for the individuals involved, the GM should call for all characters to make an *Athletics* General Ability Test. As with all tests, players (and the GM) may opt to spend points from their *Athletics* pool to increase their final number.

This roll is also be modified by the physical and mental state of the characters (note that these modifiers are cumulative). Characters will the status of:

- **Hurt** - (have a *Health* General Ability pool below zero but greater than negative six) receive a -2 penalty to this Test.
- **Wounded** - (have a *Health* General Ability of negative six to negative 12), automatically go last in the sequence of actions, and (as noted by the injuries description in the *Gumshoe* games) can only attempt limited actions.
- **Shaken** - (have a *Stability* General Ability pool below zero but greater than negative five) receive a -2 penalty to their Test.
- **Mentally Impaired** - (have a *Stability* General Ability of negative six to negative 12), automatically go last in the sequence of actions, and (as noted by the injuries description in the *Gumshoe* games) can only attempt limited actions.

Further modifiers, both positive and negative, can be applied at the GM's discretion. For example, if a gun battle is taking place on an unlit underground station, the GM could justifiably place a one or two point negative modifier on the roll, etc.

ORDER OF ACTIONS

All combatants act in order of their *Athletics* Test roll - or their *Initiative* order - from highest to lowest. In the case of a tie, characters should compare their *Athletics Rating*, with the highest rated character acting first. If this is also a tie, both combatants should roll a D6 each with the highest gaining the advantage for the entire scene.

All combatants get to act once in a *round*. Once all of the combatants have acted, the *round* is completed and a new one begins with the character with the highest *Initiative* starting first again.

ACTIONS

When it is a character's turn to act, the player should decide what action(s) they want to take. While there are no restrictions on what this action can entail, it is advised that, in a regular combat situation, each round is likely only to be a few seconds of 'real' time.

Of course, during a character's action, additional tests can be called for, for example when attempting to attack an enemy, or when fleeing the scene, etc

OPTIONAL MODIFIERS

In addition to the Initiative modifiers noted above, two further optional rules can also be used:

- **Dynamic Modifiers** - This optional rule allows for the modifiers above to be used to modify a character's *Initiative* *during* a scene. I.e. If a character has their *Health* or *Stability* general abilities reduced below zero during a combat, then their current *Initiative* is reduced, etc. It should be noted that this rule does increase the amount of paperwork the GM needs to be maintain.
- **Surprise** - This optional rule can be used in the event that the characters are surprised (or they themselves surprise another group). While all individuals still roll a Simple *Athletics* General Ability Test, characters in the surprised group are not allowed to spend any points from their *Athletics* pool.